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This Week in Wabash



Hello, Wabash,

Happy Monday. I hope your week is off to a great start. Fall sure came in a hurry, huh? I remember just thinking the other week that it was unseasonably warm. I started to wonder if autumn was ever going to arrive. I have stopped wondering. This is among my favorite times of the year. (Late spring being the other.) I really enjoy these transitory times the most. Every season has its charms, of course, but the depths of both summer and winter can be a bit much for my taste.

I received [some pretty exciting news](#) last week, so I hope you don't mind if I brag about myself a bit.

The winners of the Hoosier State Press Association (HSPA) 2022 Journalism Awards were announced at a ceremony Friday, Sept. 23 at the Biltwell Event Center in Indianapolis.

I was among those recognized, as I won nine awards.

Wabash Plain Dealer Freelance Reporter Clay Maxfield was also honored with one award.

The Wabash Plain Dealer competed in Division 1, which includes non-daily publications with a circulation below 1,500. Entries must have been published between Jan. 1, 2021 and March 31, 2022.

“This is the 54th year for these awards that recognize journalism excellence from newspapers across Indiana,” said HSPA executive director Ruth Witmer.

I won first place in both the Best Editorial Page and Best Website categories.

My first place Best Business or Economic News Coverage entry included three stories about the Imagine One 85 project and its goal to curb local population loss.

My first place Best Short Feature Story entry was, “A Bible, a photo and a flag,” which was about the aftermath of the fire which destroyed Sherry Swinger's home.

My second place Best Headline Writing entry was, “Library renovation, expansion remain 'overdue' after rejection.” My third place entry in this category was, “Woman' Clubhouse buzzes with excitement.”

My second place Best General News Photo was, “Making every drop count,” which featured Mayor Scott Long receiving the city's first COVID-19 vaccination.



My third place Best Portrait entry was, “Summer fun at the libraries,” which featured a child making their way down a Slip 'N Slide in front of the North Manchester Public Library.



My third place Best Profile Feature entry was, "Welcome to Alice Cooper's nightmare."

Clay's first place Best Sports Action Photo entry was, "Manchester comeback not enough," which featured Manchester High School varsity softball player Paxton Baker sliding into home base during last year's first-round sectional loss to Whitko High School.



Clay has been contributing local sports stories and photos to the Wabash Plain Dealer since March 2021.

I have been Wabash Plain Dealer editor since June 2019. I have won a total of 19 awards during that time.

The Indiana Professional Chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ) announced the winners of their 2021 Best in Indiana Journalism Contest at a ceremony in April. I was among those recognized as I won awards in two separate categories for publications with circulation below 30,000.

My second place Best Education Reporting entry included five stories. The first two were about the local Literacy for Companionship program, which pairs emerging readers with dogs and cats in need of a home. The third was about Sharp Creek Elementary School teacher Amber Bretzman teaching 9/11 to her fifth-graders 20 years later, including the acrostic poems her students wrote as a part of the assignment and the Sept. 11, 2001 and Sept. 12, 2001 front pages of the Plain Dealer, which published with the assistance of Wabash Carnegie Public Library executive director Ware Wimberly. The fourth was about Sharp Creek Elementary School K-Club members showing appreciation to local veterans on Veterans Day. The fifth was about the results of the second year of Operation Reach Out.

My third place Best Personality Profile entry, "Much more than just the best bartender," was about 2021 Best of Wabash County winner Teizo Fox.

This is the third year in a row I have been honored at the SPJ contest. The Best in Indiana Journalism contest is Indiana's only open journalism contest. This was the 43rd year that journalists from around the state competed in dozens of print, broadcast and online categories. Entries were published during 2021 and were judged by members of the Arkansas Professional, Colorado Professional and Utah Headliners chapters. Both the 2019 and 2020 awards were announced online instead of being delivered in person. This year's ceremony was held at the 502 East Event Centre in Carmel.

In June 2021, I won awards in three separate categories in the 2020 SPJ contest. My second place entry in the Personality Profile category was a story about local DivorceCare group leader Janet Quillen. My third place entry in the Criminal Justice Reporting category included two stories about overcrowding in the Wabash County Jail, two stories about the murder of Nakota "Fergie" Kelly and a story about the opening of the baby box at Wabash Fire Station 1. My third place entry in the Environmental Reporting category included a story about 120 years of history at John Hartsough's family farm in North Manchester; and stories about Teen Indiana Master Naturalists, Salamonie Preschool, a monarch butterfly Senior Luncheon presentation and women landowners, all meeting at Salamonie Lake. And in May 2020, my also won third place for Arts and Entertainment Writing at the 2019 SPJ contest, which included five stories published in 2019. These stories included interviews with Amy Grant, David Crosby, Buck Trent of "Hee Haw," Richard Sterban of the Oak Ridge Boys and Patrick Myers of Killer Queen before their respective performances at the Honeywell Center.

In addition to the SPJ awards, in July 2021, I was also honored in four separate categories at the HSPA 53rd annual Better Newspaper Contest for 2021 in Division 1. My first place entry in the Best Business or Economic News Coverage category included three stories on Wabash County family farms, including one about Bowman Family Farms during the 2019 Purdue University Indiana Farm Management Tour, one about 120 years of agricultural history on John Hartsough's family farm in North Manchester and one about local farmers assisting Dean Stouffer to harvest his fields after he fell ill with COVID-19. My second place entry in the Headline Writing category included "The Bible Memory Man' cometh," "Family Video in Wabash checking out" and "Fowl at the fair." My third place entry in the Best Profile Feature category was a story about David Crosby before his performance at the Honeywell Center. My third-place entry in the Best Feature Photo category was for "Bringing out the 'big check,'" which showed Charity Lane being surprised with \$50,000 from Publishers Clearing House.



Well, that's all I have for you today. Have a great rest of your week.

Best,
Rob



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